

*Jack.* I don't think that, as things are now, it would be of much practical value to either of us, Dr. Chasuble.

*Chasuble.* I am grieved to hear such sentiments from you, Mr. Worthing. They savour of the heretical views of the Anabaptists, views that I have completely refuted in four of my unpublished sermons. However, as your present mood seems to be one peculiarly secular, I will return to the church at once. Indeed, I have just been informed by the pew-opener that for the last hour and a half Miss Prism has been waiting for me in the vestry.

*Lady Bracknell.* [Starting.] Miss Prism! Did I hear you mention a Miss Prism?

*Chasuble.* Yes, Lady Bracknell. I am on my way to join her.

*Lady Bracknell.* Pray allow me to detain you for a moment. This matter may prove to be one of vital importance to Lord Bracknell and myself. Is this Miss Prism a female of repellent aspect, remotely connected with education?

*Chasuble.* [Somewhat indignantly] She is the most cultivated of ladies, and the very picture of respectability.

*Lady Bracknell.* It is obviously the same person. May I ask what position she holds in your household?

*Chasuble.* [Severely] I am a celibate, madam.

*Jack.* [Interposing] Miss Prism, Lady Bracknell, has been for the last three years Miss Cardew's esteemed governess and valued companion.

*Lady Bracknell.* In spite of what I hear of her, I must see her at once. Let her be sent for.

*Chasuble.* [Looking off] She approaches; she is nigh.

*Enter Miss Prism hurriedly.*

*Miss Prism.* I was told you expected me in the vestry, dear Canon. I have been waiting for you there for an hour and three-quarters.

[Catches sight of Lady Bracknell, who has fixed her with a stony glare. Miss Prism grows pale and quails. She,

looks anxiously round as if desirous to escape.

*Lady Bracknell.* [In a severe, judicial voice] Prism! [Miss

Prism bows her head in shame] Come here, Prism! [Miss

Prism approaches in a humble manner] Prism! Where is!

that baby? [General consternation. The Canon starts back

in horror. Algernon and Jack pretend to be anxious to shield

Cecily and Gwendolen from hearing the details of a terrible,

public scandal] Twenty-eight years ago, Prism, you left